

**ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

ACTION MINUTES

MEETING OF MARCH 31, 2011

The meeting was convened at 7:03 p.m. The following members were in attendance: Soo-Lee Cho, Tom Gibney, Julie Carr, Charles Littlefield, Jason Anthony, Roald Schrack, Sean Hart.

The chair moved to approve the agenda which was approved unanimously.

The committee considered the draft minutes from the March 24 meeting. Two minor corrections were noted. Sean Hart moved approval, seconded by Jason Anthony. Revised minutes approved unanimously.

The meeting then was turned over to the guest speaker, Bruce Crispell, from Montgomery County Public Schools. Mr. Crispell provided hand-outs for the committee on the forecasting methodology for schools, and the preliminary forecast for the 2011-12 school year for Rockville Schools. He noted that the preliminary forecast does not include the pipeline development approvals as required by the Beall's Grant court opinion.

Mr. Crispell noted that there are two important forecasts – short term and long term. In the short term, births in the county have been the major contributor to student growth since 1997, even with a small dip in 2008 and 2009. Birth rates are expected to continue at elevated levels for the foreseeable future. Students entering kindergarten progress through the system. There is also in-migration and out-migration from the system that is taken into account.

There has been a fairly steady ratio of births to kindergarten enrollments of about .75 to .85. The offering of full-day kindergarten has raised the participation rates. Based on the state's reporting, the percentage of students going to public schools compared to private schools has gone up in recent years from 80% to 86%.

There is usually a minor increase in first grade students compared to the kindergartens as some families opt to go from private kindergarten to public grade schools. There may also be a bit of a drop in 3rd and 4th grades as a result of the gifted program. And magnet programs will also draw some students away.

In 2009-10, about 12,000 kids came into the school system, while only about 10,000 left. In the past, these numbers have been closer to even. Mr. Crispell acknowledged that

there is more mobility within lower income areas, where there are usually more renters. Immigration has also had a significant impact.

Housing trends are a very important component of the forecast. New units vs. re-sales make a difference. Data on new development is obtained routinely from the various jurisdictions, as well as the developers to determine what kinds of units are planned. The recent high-density multi-family projects have had very little impact on the schools. Child generation rates for these projects is very low. The Town Square, with 640 units, only generates 30 elementary students currently.

Clarksburg is the major new housing area now. In the turnover areas, we have to fall back on the school enrollment trends in the area. In the down-county area the major impact has come from turnover, not from new development.

MCPS intends to retain any closed or unused school sites, and not surplus or sell them. Sean asked about the Peary High School site and Bruce responded that the Board of Education opposed the sale but it was approved anyway by the County Council.

The much greater diversity of the population mitigates against another child “bust” in the foreseeable future. Also, there has been no discernable difference in generation rates from moderate-priced dwelling units, primarily because they make up such a small percentage of the total units in a project. If it was 100% MPDU’s there may be more generation of kids.

High schools have more capacity flexibility than elementary and middle schools. Elementary schools today are designed with core capacities of either 640 or 740 students. Older schools, even with modernization, may not be able to increase the core capacity. There was discussion about core capacity vs. program capacity. Bruce confirmed that program capacity can be higher than core capacity because program capacity includes fixed and relocatable classrooms. Bruce will provide the core capacities for all the Rockville schools. Several committee members observed that it seems that core capacity would make more sense for planning.

Sean asked about obtaining the factors and algorithms that go into the forecasting method. Bruce indicated that it isn’t that sophisticated. It is primarily based on the birth rates and other migration and diversity patterns noted above. Questions were also asked about whether MCPS compares Montgomery County experience with national or regional trends. Bruce responded that he does not make those comparisons and does not consider them to be applicable to Montgomery County, but he does periodically compare Montgomery County with Fairfax County, VA.

Bruce stated that the City’s 2-year capacity test seems too short, since most development projects take more than 2 years to build out, occupy, and begin generating students. He believes the County’s 5-year outlook makes more sense. He noted also that the County aggregates cluster capacity by school types, rather than on an individual school basis. It gives the County some more flexibility. There was discussion about how well the MCPS

projections that CIP funding will be available align to actual CIP funding for school expansion or new build. It was requested to obtain data on funding requests vs. actual construction appropriations by the County in recent years.

There are boundary studies going on all the time in the County, especially in the case where a new school such as Hungerford Park is in the planning stages. The Board of Education tries very hard to maintain the high school cluster boundaries, and adjust within if possible. A request has been made to provide information on the CIP regarding the Board of Education vs. Montgomery County Council priorities.

Bruce agreed to provide a survey of school student generation rates from select neighborhoods as requested by the committee. The committee will provide the staff with the list of neighborhoods for which the survey data is desired.

An e-mail question was posed – How often do we borrow within clusters. The answer is that the clusters are evaluated for capacity as a combined whole for each school type.

A second e-mail question – How often has the County's school test blocked any new development? The answer is none – the County essentially promises a solution to solve the issue even if it is not yet formally programmed in the budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.